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The
Women's Land Army
in 1918

WOMAN'S LAND ARMY OF AMERICA
19 West 44th Street New York

Picking Pears, Oregon.

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The Woman's Land Army in 1918

In 1917 at Bedford N. Y., the initial experiment of the "unit plan" was made, and later the Mayor's Committee of New York City put out ten more units. In all about three hundred women worked in these units.

In the winter of 1918 the Woman's Land Army of America was organized, and during the summer twenty-one states became active in which there were about nine hundred units and training camps with about ten thousand women working in them.

SYNOPSIS OF WORK DONE BY STATES.

State	No. of Units	No. of workers	Most successful work
California	42	1481	Fruit picking and packing; dairy work.
Connecticut	10	270	Hoeing, truck gardening; grain, silo work, fruit.
District of Columbia	4	150	Trucking, gathering fruit and vegetables; hay making.
Illinois	71	92	General farming, handling tractors and machinery.
Kansas	(about)	100	Hoeing and picking fruit.
Maryland	2	130	Thining, raising vegetables; harvesting, Threshing.
Massachusetts	10	350	All reports excellent.
Michigan	2		All work successful.
Mississippi	1		
Missouri	2		
New Hampshire	5	69	Field work.
New Jersey	35	915	Sorting fruit.
New Mexico		100	Tractors; hay work.
New York	42	1200	All reports good.
Oregon	681	1250	Seasonal work.
Ohio	5	125	All reports good.
Pennsylvania	22	[illegible]	Hoeing, weeding, care of stock, harvesting.
Rhode Island	2		
Vermont	3	50	(about)
Virginia	4	20	Handling fruit.
Washington	4	406	

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The women in these units were of various types, the different groups being divided approximately as follows: college 60%; Professional women 25%; Trade workers 11%; women non wage earners 3%.

The majority of these women had no previous farm experience. The amount and kind of training they received varied greatly in different units and in different parts of the country. In many of the small eastern units no training was given; in others a few girls were trained who became squad leaders. In some large units such as Bedford, systematic instruction in a house garden was given each girl before she was sent out to work. In the middle west there has been concentration on training of a serious type with a view to permanent agricultural employment.

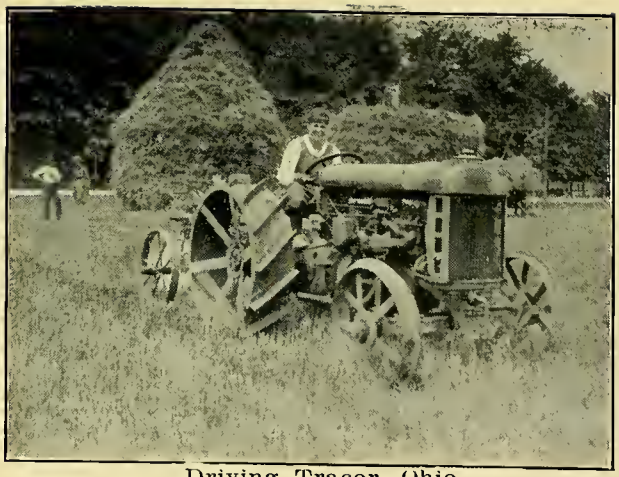
There are four distinct types of training; one brief practical instruction that can be given in the units; one extended practical course, such as is given at Libertyville, Illinois, and which fits the women to be a practical farmer; scientific training such as is given in many agricultural colleges; and training for supervisors of units such as was given last summer at Wellesley College.

The Land Army supplied the farmers and fruit growers with practically every kind of farm labor. The women did ploughing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting. They cut, stacked and loaded hay, corn, rye and wheat, and performed every phase of silo work. They worked on big western farms and orchards, on

commercial farms, dairy farms, truck farms, private estates and in home gardens. They did poultry work, dairy work, bee keeping, and teaming. They learned to handle tractors, harvesters and other farm machinery. In slack seasons they scythed brush, sawed and stacked wood and did other work which was not strictly food production. In all of these occupations they were a distinct success. Their efficiency is proved by the change of attitude on the part of the farmers from scepticism or incredulity regarding the ability of women to do the work to enthusiastic appreciation of the help given.

If well managed, with a reasonable amount of cooperation from farmers in providing rainy day work, the units are self supporting. Whether or not they are able to pay rent or to make an adequate return on capital invested in equipment depends on local conditions. In many cases houses or tents, furniture and some means of transportation between the units and the farms must be provided without expectation of return.

It was as a war emergency that the Woman's Land Army started. But now that peace has come its activities are needed more than ever; for, in the reconstruction period that is at hand, America has before her the duty of feeding a large part of the world. The Food Administration has pledged 20,000,000 tons of food to Europe in 1919. This is almost double the amount sent last year, and, if America is to keep her pledge, an increase in the labor supply will be imperative. Although in some cases the soldiers may return to the farms they are not likely to come in time for the planting, nor in sufficient numbers for the later work.



Driving Tracor, Ohio.

The Woman's Land Army, therefore, plans to continue and to extend its efforts, and through its State organizations to provide women farm laborers in units wherever there may be need of them. The Federal Department of Labor has created a Division of the Woman's Land Army which cooperates with the volunteer organization.

Farmers who are interested in having units of women laborers established in their neighborhood, girls who would like work, and people who might help in the management or financing of units can be put in touch with their State organization by applying to the

National Office of the

Woman's Land Army of America, Inc.

19 West 44th Street, New York City.